



BETWEEN 1928 AND 1952, the old John J. Taylor mansion on South Fifth street housed the Fairbury hospital. It stood on the site of the present hospital.

Growth of Hospital Shows Exceptional Community Spirit

The history of the Fairbury hospital is 46 years old. Through these years the institution has grown from the unassuming beginning as a two room nursing home to the realized dream of a completely modern structure built expressly as a hospital.

The story of the Fairbury hospital is also the story of the community which it serves, for it has been because of the indefatigable and tireless efforts of the community that a dream has become a reality.

The roots of the Fairbury hospital were sunk into the ground one day in 1911 when a Mrs. Veters opened a nursing home above the building now occupied by the Fairbury Bakery. Steam baths and other treatments were a part of this early beginning. Miss Rachel Olsen assisted Mrs. Veters.

The hospital was incorporated in 1914, with Dr. J. R. Rayburn elected the first president.

The need for a larger and more well-equipped structure was keenly felt by many, however, one of whom was the late J. H. Langstaff. Through the efforts of Dr. Langstaff,

Dr. Rayburn and others of the city, a site for the new hospital was chosen, it being the cement block residence structure of John Monroe, located at 313 W. Oak street.

And it was then that the hospital truly became a community project, a classification which has remained to this date. Local carpenters donated labor and tools and began remodeling the inside. Local decorators painted walls, refinished woodwork and polished floors, donating time and labor. Material was given by local merchants.

Operating room furnishings and equipment were donated by Dr. Langstaff. Ten persons gave \$100 each as a foundation to establish the hospital. The V.Y.P.U. of the Baptist church gave silverware and kitchen utensils. The Ladies Society of the Presbyterian church donated sets of china dishes, rugs and quilts. The Ladies Aid of the Christian church offered sewing and comfort.

The Feb. 6, 1914 issue of the Blade effectively chronicled the interest of the community by continuing the list of donations.

Kring Bros. gave flowers for the opening. Mrs. G. Y. McDowell gave a dining room table and chairs. Mrs. George Decker a quilt. Mrs. Isaac Walton, mattress, pillows and bed clothes. Miss Lizzie Anker a rug. Mrs. Will Goslin contributed sewing. Mr. and Mrs. Will Schmidt parlor curtains, Miss Acca Stafford, tea towels. Charles Day furnace repairs and plumbing. Alex Milne, flowers, Mrs. Martha Powell, a carpet and many more.

Donating time and labor were A. Cooleny, Grover Troehler, Bert Slaughter, W. Amsbarry, E. Woodard, M. G. Sterling, Drennen Bros. Thomas Slocombe, W. J. Langabeer, Ben Demler, Lon Hill, Fred Lough, The Blade, and Local Record, Rolland Woods, Mrs. Hartley, Peter Peebles, S. C. Cox, Henry Watts, J. K. Shook, Model Grocery and on and on with almost an endless list.

On Feb. 2, 1914, the new hospital was formally opened to the public by a reception held during the afternoon and evening. A great number of residents availed themselves of the opportunity to visit the new hospital. Miss Olsen was employed as superintendent.

This site continued to serve the needs of the community and surrounding area until 1928, when once again steps were taken to expand the facilities to their necessary level. On January 29, 1928, the hospital board, bidding at public auction, purchased the estate of Frieda Munz Scharlach, the home built by John J. Taylor on South Fifth Street. The amount paid was \$6,155.

It is significant that in purchasing the property, the hospital board pointed out that sooner or later the city will have to have a new hospital building, and the property purchased is by far the most logical site in the city. When the time comes for the erection of a new hospital, the house now on the place will be torn down.

Again, the public came to the front in preparing the rambling home as a hospital, with much labor, time, and materials again donated, an addition was built to the structure and

equipped as an operating room. Partitions were taken out and added rooms furnished by donations, the outside painted, and an oil heater installed, to name a few of the renovations. The American Legion donated considerable aid.

The hospital committee of the Fairbury Woman's Club sponsored a drive for funds which netted \$8,000.

And once again, 19 months later, local residents stood back to admire their work, and on Saturday August 17, 1929, the doors were thrown wide for open house.

Ten beds, a large kitchen, nursery, dumb-waiter, elevator, reception office, nurse's room expanded closet and storage space and other refinements made the community glow at its accomplishment.

The Blade of the following week gave this account of the formal opening.

Entering the house from the front vestibule the broad stairway with its balustrade of old, dark wood, makes a pleasing contrast to the uniform ivory enamel used thruout the downstairs for the wood finish. Hard wood floors were already in the main rooms on the first floor and battleship linoleum has been used as a floor covering for the remainder of the house.

The walls of the living rooms are covered with bright, attractive paper. There are soft colored drapes with filmy curtains at the windows and substantial room size rugs on the floors. A chart desk and chair, the gift of the Piper City ladies, placed in the recess of the hall beyond the stairway is a convenient arrangement. A pretty, bright set of wicker furniture gives a touch of attractiveness to the reception room to the right at the far end of the hall. North of the reception room is the dining room with the usual pieces augmented by the built-in china closet which opens thru into the pantry.

An east porch opening from the dining room offers a wonderful view of the garden and by the means of a incline approach, will furnish a means for taking wheel-chair patients out upon the lawn.

To the north and east of the dining room is the kitchen with both north and south windows, and a convenient arrangement of sink and work table in relation to range and gas stove. Ample cupboard room is also a feature. The back stairs come into this room. East of the kitchen is the utility room where the ironing will be done, and in one corner of which is the breakfast nook. East of this room is the maid's room.

At the head of the basement stairs which go down from the utility room, is a coal shoot for the range coal. Every available space has been used for storage closets and modern conveniences.

The basement under the eastern wing, houses the steam heating plant with its oil-o-matic burner. Other parts of the basement furnish space for the laundry room, with its electric

washer (the gift of the Walton Bros. Co. employees), its stationary tubs with the hot and cold water faucets and convenient drains. Fruit rooms and storage rooms take up the rest of the basement floor.

The second floor has six bed rooms. There is also a diet kitchen on this floor, fitted with a skell-gas burner cupboards and dumb-waiter service to the main kitchen. Laundry shoots connect both floors with the basement. All bed rooms are furnished with a Symmonds Ford bed, dresser, a combination commode, and bed-side table, one reception chair and one high backed rocker, all of metal.

The patients rooms vary only in the color of the decorations and of the furniture. The wood-work is white enamel, the walls are in pastel tints and the furniture is brown, tan, or green enamel finish. All rooms have two windows and a good closet. Bath rooms, toilets, and lavatories are placed thruout the house to the best possible advantage.

The next step on the road to Fairbury's dream of a completely equipped and modern hospital plant came on October 1, 1941, when ground was broken for a new obstetrical unit. By now many new faces were among the group taking active part in the planning, building, and financing of the newest expansion but the same spirit of community helpfulness prevailed to see the job through.

A completely modern nursery delivery room and 11 additional beds on the first floor, a modern kitchen and doctors' lounge and shower, a nurses' lounge, a fruit and vegetable storage room, kitchen, laundry and a new heating system for both the addition and main unit were prize refinements of the new unit.

Months stretched into a year then a year-and-a half, but on February 13, 1943, the obstetrical unit was opened for public inspection, and 11 days later was put into service. The first portion of the new hospital prophesized 14 years earlier, was complete.

Supervising the project had been members of the hospital board, Dr. W. A. Marshall, president; Dr. F. H. Miller, vice-president; Miss May Bennett, Secretary; C. R. Voris, treasurer; J. N. Bach, Mrs. Kate Huntoon. Dr. Lockner, of Chatsworth; Dr. Shaddle, of Forrest; Dr. Branch, of Piper City; Dr. J. H. Langstaff, Mrs. M. A. Anderson, Mrs. Orville Lange. Mrs. Walter Burt, Mrs. Jessie Powell, Mrs. Edward Carlson and M. D. Fugate.

Members of the building committee at that time were M. D. Fugate, Chairman, Mayor Klopfenstein, Dr. Miller, C. R. Voris and Edward Lange.

On August 9, 1950, phase two of creating a modern hospital on the site of the old John J. Taylor homestead was begun. On that day, excavation for the second wing was started.

Again, as on past occasions, donated labor, materials, time and money and various benefits proved important factors in the completion of the wing.

On Sunday, Feb. 17, 1952, open house in the new wing was held. More than 1,100 highly pleased persons flowed through the new wing to see the results of the community's labor. Almost \$1,200 was donated by those making the grand opening tour of inspection. William Arends, hospital manager, acted as host.

The obstetrical wing to the southeast and the new wing to the northeast now stood divided by the original old Taylor house. It remained now as prophesized in 1928 for that structure to be torn down and the two wings connected by yet another new building.

Work to this end was begun immediately; a group of volunteer laborers began tearing down the former old mansion, which had been built in the 1860's. On March 10, 1952, ten days later it had been completely razed.

The hospital board, composed of John Gerber, president; Roy Taylor, vice-president; Hazel Metz, sec.; Hartzell Munz, treas.; Sue Lange, Emma Burt, Dr. C. J. Shaddle, C. B. Day, Salome Schlipf, Lloyd Bornkasser, Mrs. Charles Ambrose, Mrs. Margaretha Myer, Clifford Denker, Harry Bach, William Arends and Supt. of Nurses Mrs. Dorothy Clark, then met in a lengthy session and decided to organize a drive at once for a sum of between \$90,000 and \$100,000 with which the new connecting building could be built.

Excavation for the new building was completed on May 15, 1952. At that time C. C. Thompson, chairman of the fund drive, announced \$20,000 had been pledged or received. Organizations in Fairbury and surrounding communities again came to the front in sponsoring fund-raising activities, but one of the most successful was a pledge drive held at the high school in which \$24,174 was raised. In November an additional \$9,300 was collected in a house-to-house canvass.

At the time, it was thought the fund goal was within about \$25,000 of being reached, but near the end of May, 1953 it was announced the hospital fund had been depleted, and \$40,000 would be needed to finish the building. The drive was pushed forward throughout the summer as work on the building itself was continued.

By Oct. 1, only \$9,000 remained to be raised. A great day arrived Saturday, Nov. 21, 1953. The newly completed building was thrown open for public inspection. The dream of a new modern hospital had been realized.

Included in the new section were modern office facilities for administrative and nursing personnel, a new kitchen, operating rooms, X-ray rooms, ten private rooms, and waiting rooms.

On the building committee which had accomplished so much were Lloyd Bornkasser, chairman; Roy Taylor, vice chairman; Louis Heins, treasurer; John Sutter, John Roth, Kenneth Rosenboom, Chatsworth; Archie Underwood, Piper City; William Metz, Forrest; and Roger Lindenbaum, also of Forrest.

The building of the central portion, which for the first time made a complete and modern unit of the hospital, did not, however, end expansion. An increased continued use of the hospital facilities soon made it apparent that even more beds were needed.

Work on starting a fourth wing was begun Oct. 25, 1956. The wing, which runs north and south from the east end of the north wing, will bring the capacity of the hospital to 90 beds and is under construction at the present time.

TRANSCRIPTION NOTES:

On February 14, 1952, the Blade published an article about Fairbury hospital history because the old 1860s Taylor house was being torn down and replaced by the first new brick hospital building next to it.

For the special 100th Anniversary of Fairbury, on April 3, 1958, the Blade located the earlier 1952 article and re-used most of it, adding new developments at the end of the article that had occurred since 1952.

The 1952 article correctly stated that a Fairbury hospital had been in service for 41 years since the first hospital was established in 1911. When the Blade updated the article for publication in 1958, it should have revised the 41 years to 47 years, but this change was not made.

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